

*Newsletter for friends of
Coatesville VA Medical Center*

September 2009

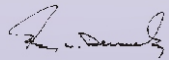
Director's Message

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Andy Pahountis, director, Community & Congressional Affairs, for his almost 38 years of service to the federal government and wish him well in his retirement, which will be official October 2, 2009. A Vietnam Veteran, Andy has been at Coatesville VA Medical Center for the last 17 years. He says that what he'll miss most is working with Veterans and their families. It has always been evident to me, in working with Andy, that he is truly an advocate for Veterans. He will be missed.

I am pleased to introduce Kirk Fernitz as the new director, Community & Congressional Affairs. Kirk has been at Coatesville for the last 20 years, and just returned from his second tour in Iraq. As a Veteran himself, Kirk will continue the important work of advocating for Veterans.

As we say goodbye to Andy, and wish him well in his future, we are happy to welcome Kirk and look forward to the good work that he will do on behalf of Veterans.

Thank you,



Gary W. Devansky, Director

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Welcome Home, American Heroes!

Coatesville VA Medical Center hosted the 3rd Annual Welcome Home Celebration on Saturday August 29, 2009. Though the event was planned as an outdoor picnic and festival, it seemed that the weather wasn't going to cooperate. We decided to move the celebration indoors, and though the weather held out, the decision proved to be the best move as attendees moved freely between the activities inside and outside. More than 200 Veterans and 150 family members attended and about 75 volunteers ran the event with 42 exhibitors displaying information about their programs.

The celebration began with a moving rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner" by the Tiller Sisters and a heartfelt speech by Jason Nielson, US Army (Retired) and member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart. Mr. Gary W. Devansky, medical center director, Senator Andy Dinniman, Representative Tom Houghton, and Bill Walsh, representing Congressman Joseph Sestak, all addressed the crowd.

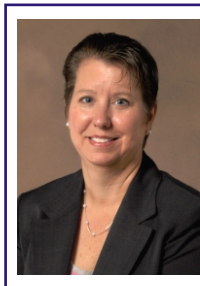
Once the program was complete, our hard-working volunteers served a delicious lunch of hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad, chips, soda and cake. Many attendees enjoyed their meals inside while listening to live music by local artists "Quaker" Dave and Kevin Ferguson, as well as "Oldies" band, Threshold. Others enjoyed their lunches outside at the picnic tables.

At the center of the event were the many exhibitors who gathered in the Great Hall. These exhibitors provided valuable guidance and comprehensive information about VA benefits, eligibility and enrollment, health care services, veterans service organizations, outside programs and employment opportunities. Topics of particular interest included post traumatic stress disorder and women veterans health.

We also had a lot of fun! Between live music, face-painting, Arts & Crafts and a magic show by local performer, Kevin Joyce, a good time was had by all! The celebration would not have been possible without the hard work of the Welcome Home Celebration committee and many volunteers. Thanks to all and we hope to see you again next year!



Kirk Fernitz and Andy Pahountis



Robin Aube-Warren Named Associate Director

As many of you know, long-time associate director, Don Means, retired in April. Ms. Robin Aube-Warren became our new associate director in August. Over the past 15 years, she has served as chief of police at Asheville VAMC, NC, Carl Vinson VAMC, located in Dublin, GA and most recently at Memphis VAMC, TN. Originally from the Northeast, Ms. Aube Warren says, "I am happy to return home to the East Coast, and I'm even happier to serve Veterans as a facility associate director. I believe strongly in personnel development and I hope to bring this philosophy to my new position. I look forward to this challenge."

Flu Season is Here, Protect Yourself

This year, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is preparing for an early and active flu season. It expects both 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal influenza to cause illness, hospital stays and deaths this season. Coatesville VA Medical Center is currently offering flu shots to Veterans, volunteers and employees. They are available Monday through Friday from 8:30am until 3:30pm in Building 2, Room 115 and Building 57, Room 131 and on Mondays from 4pm until 7pm in Building 2, Urgent Care. Spring City and Springfield outpatient clinics offer the shots on Thursdays from 12:30pm until 3:30pm. Information about H1N1 flu shots is forthcoming.

Mental Illness Awareness Week October 4th through 10th

In 1990, the U.S. Congress established the first week of October as "Mental Illness Awareness Week" (MIAW) in recognition of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and their efforts to raise mental illness awareness and decrease stigma. Coatesville VA Medical Center will be out in the community the entire week to educate and advocate. To find times and locations, please visit www.coatesville.va.gov.

Annual Veterans Freedom Run/Walk Saturday, November 7th

Sponsored by American Legion Post #422 of Honey Brook, the race will benefit Veteran patients of Coatesville VA Medical Center. The race will take place on November 7th, beginning and ending at Caln Township West Park, located adjacent to the Community Living Center grounds. The day will start with the Kids Fun Run at 8:30am and the 1 mile walk and 5k race following. An awards ceremony will take place at 10am at Caln West. Contact American Legion member Chuck Small at 610-563-5576 for registration forms and more details.

Veterans Week Activities

Tuesday, November 3

Women Veterans Luncheon

Wednesday, November 4

Gospel Concert

Thursday, November 5

**Day of Beauty Program
Banquet**

Friday, November 6

Parade

Flag Ceremony

VFW Auxiliary

Karaoke Party

Saturday, November 7

5K Freedom Walk/Run

Monday, November 9

Variety Show

Tuesday, November 10

CLC Luncheon

Interfaith Service

Wednesday, November 11

VETERANS DAY

Salute

Coatesville Veterans Affairs Medical Center Set to Begin Stimulus Projects

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Coatesville Veterans Affairs Medical Center has been funded for three new construction projects. These projects will not only enhance the care provided by the medical center, but will also bring money and work to the local economy. These three projects are expected to be awarded to service disabled veteran-owned small businesses. They should be completed by winter, 2010.

The largest of the three projects is a 2.2 million dollar pharmacy modernization. This project will relocate the pharmacy to a more convenient space for patient access and will expand it to 6,000 square feet. The renovation will also include a 4,500 square foot space below the patients' area that will house storage, shipping and receiving, inventory breakdown, emergency dispensing and administration spaces. The two areas will be connected by a freight elevator.

The second project will upgrade the facility's central steam plant. The project will provide a computerized control and monitoring system, which will improve overall boiler operations and increase the plant's reliability. The system will increase energy efficiency, and reduce fossil fuel consumption as well as operating costs. The project will cost approximately \$725,000.

The third project will correct electrical deficiencies. It will replace or upgrade much of the aging electrical infrastructure throughout the medical center. The project will provide a safer, more reliable electrical system. It will cost approximately \$690,000.

The purpose of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate, is to create and save jobs, jump start our economy, and build the foundation for long-term economic growth. The act includes measures to modernize the nation's infrastructure, enhance America's energy independence, expand educational opportunities, increase access to health care, provide tax relief and protect those in greatest need.

Hire A Veteran

Join a growing number of local employers who recognize our Veterans as valuable employees. Contact Susan Wieser at 610-380-4311 to learn more about our Work Restoration Program. Some businesses may be eligible for a small business tax credit.

Quitting Smoking is Hard...

Your health care providers at Coatesville VA Medical Center know this and are offering new resources to help you stop thinking about quitting smoking and finally DO IT! All VISN 4 medical centers will now offer the Quit for Life program to Veterans and employees. The program offers a combination of medication support, phone-based behavior coaching, web-based learning and other support tools. This method is at least eight times more effective than quitting "cold turkey". If you are interested, please speak to your provider. There is no better time than today to think about your future. For more information about the Quit for Life program, please visit www.freeclear.com/quit-for-life.

Enrollment and Eligibility

You can inquire about your eligibility and enroll for benefits by visiting building 2, room B10A.

You can also call 610-384-7711, extensions 5034 or 5008 if you have questions. Some of our clinics have evening hours on Wednesdays.



HILLTOPICS

Hilltopics is published quarterly for friends of Coatesville VA Medical Center. Please address suggestions, comments or story ideas to: Kathleen Pomorski, extension 4203 or kathleen.pomorski@va.gov. The editor reserves the right to make changes and/or edits. Layout/design/photography provided by CVAMC Medical Media Service.